

For Immediate Release
December 20, 2004

Bryan Wilkes
(202) 586-7371

U.S. Signs Contract As Part of Effort to Permanently Shut Down Plutonium Production Reactors in Russia

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- As part of its effort to permanently shut down the last three weapons-grade plutonium production reactors in Russia, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) signed a \$285 million contract with the Washington Group International, Inc. (WGI) to refurbish electric power generating facilities in the closed city of Seversk, Russia. The refurbishment of these facilities will allow for the permanent shutdown of the two reactors located at Seversk.

The agreement is a major milestone in the NNSA Elimination of Weapons Grade Plutonium Production (EWGPP) Program and a key element to NNSA's overall efforts to reduce the risk of nuclear proliferation by providing improved security of nuclear materials, disposing of existing material, and halting the production of new weapons-grade plutonium.

"I am pleased we have reached the point where a contract is now in place for the refurbishment of electric power generating facilities which will allow us to shut down the plutonium production plants in Seversk, Russia. The continued operation of these plutonium production plants causes both nonproliferation and nuclear safety concerns, and when shut down will be two less sources of nuclear weapons grade plutonium. I look forward to the continued cooperation with our Russian partners on worldwide nonproliferation issues," NNSA Administrator Linton F. Brooks said.

EWGPP's goal in Seversk, a nuclear weapons site near Tomsk, Russia, is to permanently shut down the two plutonium production reactors and replace their capacity with that from a refurbished coal-fired heat and electricity plant. The two reactors, which produce heat and electricity for surrounding communities, also produce enough plutonium to make a few bombs per week.

The project at Seversk will involve refurbishing or replacing existing coal-fired boilers, providing one new high-pressure coal-fired boiler, replacing turbine generators, completing construction of the fuel supply system, and refurbishing the industrial heating unit and ancillary systems. NNSA and its Russian counterpart, the Federal Atomic Energy Agency (Rosatom), will work cooperatively with WGI, a U.S. contractor, and Rosatomstroï, the Russian integrating contractor, to procure equipment and manage construction. The project is scheduled for completion in December 2008.

Another equally important part of the EWGPP mission is to shut down the third plutonium production reactor near Zheleznogorsk, another nuclear weapon site in Russia. Deputy Secretary of Energy Kyle McSillarow recently approved the cost and schedule range for this project, which will help facilitate the permanent shutdown of the remaining plutonium production reactor.

###